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Kokuho (film)

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Kokuho

Theatrical release poster

Japanese	国宝
Directed by	Lee Sang-il
Screenplay by	Satoko Okudera
Based on	*Kokuho* by Shuichi Yoshida
Produced by	Shinzo Matsuhashi
Starring	Ryo Yoshizawa Ryusei Yokohama Mitsuki Takahata Shinobu Terajima Min Tanaka Ken Watanabe
Cinematography	Sofian El Fani
Edited by	Tsuyoshi Imai
Music by	Marihiko Hara
Production companies	Myriagon Studio Credeus
Distributed by	Toho
Release dates	May 18, 2025 (Cannes) June 6, 2025 (Japan)
Running time	175 minutes
Country	Japan
Language	Japanese
Budget	¥1.2 billion (US$8 million)
Box office	US$107.2 million[1]

Kokuho (国宝, *Kokuhō*; lit. National Treasure) is a 2025 Japanese drama film directed by Lee Sang-il, written by Satoko Okudera and based on a novel of the same name by Shuichi Yoshida. Starring Ryo Yoshizawa, Ryusei Yokohama, Mitsuki Takahata, Shinobu Terajima, Min Tanaka, and Ken Watanabe.[2][3]

The film had its world premiere in the Directors' Fortnight section of the 2025 Cannes Film Festival on 18 May,[4] and was theatrically released in Japan by Toho on 6 June. It was a critical and commercial success.[5][6] It was selected for the Best International Feature Film as the Japanese entry at the 98th Academy Awards.[7]

Synopsis [edit]

Kikuo Tachibana, born the son of a *yakuza* (Japanese mafia), was taken on as an apprentice by *kabuki* actor Hanai Hanjiro at the age of 15 after his father was murdered by a rival *yakuza*. In the world of *Kabuki*, bloodline is highly valued, but Kikuo, with his natural talent, achieves great success.

Cast [edit]

- Ryo Yoshizawa as Kikuo Tachibana / Hanai Toichiro / Hanai Hanjiro III
  - Sōya Kurokawa as young Kikuo
- Ryusei Yokohama as Shunsuke Ōgaki / Hanai Han'ya
  - Keitatsu Koshiyama as young Shunsuke
- Mitsuki Takahata as Harue Fukuda
- Shinobu Terajima as Sachiko Ōgaki, Shunsuke's mother
- Nana Mori as Akiko
- Ai Mikami as Fujikoma, a *geisha*
- Kumi Takiuchi as Ayano, Kikuo and Fujikoma's daughter
- Masatoshi Nagase as Gongorō Tachibana, Kikuo's father
- Emma Miyazawa as Matsu Tachibana, Kikuo's foster mother
- Takahiro Miura as Takeno
- Kyusaku Shimada as Umeki
- Tateto Serizawa as Genkichi
- Nakamura Ganjirō IV as Akiko's father
- Min Tanaka as Onogawa Mangiku, a Living National Treasure
- Ken Watanabe as Hanai Hanjiro II, Shunsuke's father

Production [edit]

Ryo Yoshizawa, the lead actor, trained for a year and a half under *Kabuki* actor Nakamura Ganjirō IV alongside Ryusei Yokohama. Yoshizawa regarded this film as the culmination of his career so far.[8] After seeing the completed movie, Ken Watanabe gave his strong approval, saying, 'I believe this will become Ryo's signature work.[9]

In making this work, the main cast members Ryo Yoshizawa and Ryusei Yokohama devoted a year and a half to rehearsals, including kabuki dance and movements, and spent three months filming. In an interview after filming, Yoshizawa said, "Practicing for a year and a half, I realized more and more that I couldn't keep up the pace the more I did. Compared to everyone who has been performing on stage since childhood, of course, a year and a half isn't enough to master it all, but I think what was necessary for this film was the spirit of clinging to kabuki despite understanding that. That perseverance was what I felt was needed." Yokohama commented, "I didn't know much about the world of kabuki myself. If I had known more, I might have been overwhelmed with unnecessary information, so maybe my desire to learn more came from not knowing. While respecting the customs and traditions, I also lived as a kabuki actor, and I think I was able to throw myself into it wholeheartedly.".[10]

When asked about a scene that left a strong impression while playing in this work, Yoshizawa replied, "It might not be the same as 'touching the heart,' but there is a scene where I dance wildly on a rooftop of a building. Out of about three takes, what I was doing was all over the place and mostly improvised. The one used was the last take, and the director told me to look at Nanao Mori's face. When I looked at her suddenly, she asked, 'Where are you looking?' That line naturally came out of me, thinking, 'Where am I looking?' It was a moment where, through my own filter, I wondered, 'Where is Kikuo looking?' and I couldn't quite tell. I remember everything about the filming of that scene vividly, including that honest line.".[10]

Regarding a scene or line that left an impression, Yokohama responded, "The line Shunsuke says, 'I want to become a true actor,' really struck me... Shunsuke and I are complete opposites, but that one desire was something I could resonate with and empathize with."[10]

Release [edit]

Kokuho will also be presented in the Gala Presentation at the 30th Busan International Film Festival in September 2025.[11]

Reception [edit]

Box office [edit]

This film was released in Japan on June 6 and debuted in third place with a box office revenue of ¥346 million in its first three days, following *Lilo & Stitch* and *Mission: Impossible – The Final Reckoning*.[6] It received high praise from audiences and moved up one spot in its second week, with cumulative box office revenue surpassing ¥1.1 billion.[12] The film finally hit number one in its third week and held that spot for four consecutive weeks until *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba – The Movie: Infinity Castle* was released.

Toho announced on August 18 that *Kokuho* has become the fourth Japanese live-action film to surpass ¥10 billion at the box office. It's the first film to achieve this milestone in 22 years, since *Bayside Shakedown 2*.[13] Its strong performance at the box office continued, with the film breaking ¥15 billion mark on September 24. Not only that, but the original novel recorded ten consecutive weeks at the top of the sales charts.[14] Furthermore, reports indicate that the number of people interested in Kabuki itself increased, with ticket sales rising by 20% compared to the previous year.[15]

Accolades [edit]

Award	Category	Recipient(s)	Result	Ref.
2025 Vancouver International Film Festival	Audience Award, Galas & Special Presentations	*Kokuho*	Won	[16]

See also [edit]

- List of highest-grossing films in Japan
- List of submissions to the 98th Academy Awards for Best International Feature Film
- List of Japanese submissions for the Academy Award for Best International Feature Film

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External links [edit]

- *Kokuho* at IMDb

V·T·E **Films directed by Lee Sang-il** [show]

V·T·E **Japanese submissions for the Academy Award for Best Intern**

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